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RESOLUTIONS CONCERNING THE TEACHING OF MODERN LANGUAGES

Modern Language Association of America and National Federation of Modern
Language Teachers

The two main bodies of modern foreign language teachers in this country have recently issued resolutions regarding the place of modern language teaching in American education of today. The two committees worked in harmony and each approved the resolutions of the other, though it was thought best to issue the two documents independently. The resolutions are worthy of the most careful consideration not only of modern and foreign language teachers but also of school administrators.

RESOLUTIONS OF THE MODERN LANGUAGE ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA

WHEREAS the results of the war have brought this country more closely into relation with foreign countries than was previously the case, be it

Resolved (1) That, in view of the fact that many more Americans than hitherto will go to foreign countries in diplomatic service, in commercial enterprises, and on economic, scientific, educational, and other missions, that many more foreigners than hitherto will come here on similar errands, and that international correspondence on such matters will assume greatly increased proportions, it is urgently desirable that a much larger number of Americans than hitherto be trained to understand and to use the languages of the foreign countries with which we shall be most closely associated;

(2) That, in view of the fact that the men and women of America should henceforth seriously endeavor to understand the psychology, the problems, and the achievement of the main foreign peoples, it is urgently desirable that a large proportion of high-school and college students should secure such a knowledge of the main foreign languages as will enable them to gain this understanding; and

(3) That the study of modern foreign languages should in general be begun earlier and continued longer than is now usually the case; that is, that the average student whose course is to end with the high school should study one foreign language for at least three years, and that the average student

whose course continues into college should have at least three years of modern foreign language work in high school and at least three years more in college.

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RESOLUTIONS OF THE NATIONAL FEDERATION OF MODERN LANGUAGE TEACHERS

(1) More stress should be laid on the practical value of modern language than before the war and curricula should be arranged with this consideration in view, whether the pupil is to pursue the study for one year or six.

(2) Practical value includes the discipline which comes from forming good habits of study, as well as preparation for the activities of life, and all of the direct and indirect benefits of education.

(3) It is now generally admitted that a knowledge of the life and thought of foreign nations is more desirable than ever.

(4) Speaking ability is more necessary than before the war; therefore the modern-language course in the secondary schools must be lengthened and be made more effective.

(5) Moreover, such thorough courses in the secondary schools are requisite to provide competent modern-language teachers.

(6) In the preparation for effective teaching of modern language, travel and study abroad are essential. School boards should encourage teachers to secure this training by making suitable financial provision, such as a bonus for the returning teacher, or leave of absence on half pay.

(7) Modern-language teachers should be licensed by subject, not by blanket certificate as at present.

(8) Teachers who cannot be certified to do the oral work should be allowed to teach reading courses only.

(9) In regular courses, the procedure should be analogous to the reform method, combining the advantages of the direct and indirect methods.

(10) Provision should be made for individual differences in the ability of pupils by assigning extra tasks to the more capable, and by providing special sections for those who have had one or more modern languages or show uncommon linguistic ability.

(11) For the satisfactory conduct of the class as a whole as well as for their own good, pupils should be tested out early in the course, if not before they enter, and if found deficient in oral ability should be enrolled in reading courses.

(12) The modern languages offered in secondary schools should be French, German, and Spanish, the selection of the first language to depend on local conditions.

(13) For pupils specializing in modern languages the course should be one of four to six years for the first language taken and of two to four years for the second, with at least two years between starting-points. All others should take not less than three years.

(14) Less modern language is now being studied than before the war. To remedy this situation, we urge (*a*) that the quality of modern-language teaching should be improved, and (*b*) that all modern-language teachers should feel their cause to be a common one, and should recognize that a division into separate language camps is particularly deplorable.

(15) Supervised study is highly desirable, especially in the early stages of the course.

(16) It is pedagogically desirable that as a rule language instruction in secondary schools be given by teachers who have received their education in America.

(17) The movement toward closer correlation of high-school studies is commendable, especially between the modern languages themselves, and between these subjects and English, history, and Latin. Syllabi should be prepared to facilitate such correlation.

(18) In conclusion, we wish to emphasize the following points: (*a*) While the value of modern-language study has always been great, it is bound to increase in importance with the entry of our country into more intimate political, commercial, and intellectual relations with the other countries of the world; (*b*) neither speaking ability nor mastery of a foreign language can be achieved except by a longer and more thorough course than is now given in American high schools; (*c*) as a secondary-school discipline foreign language commends itself by its cumulative process. It requires consistency of method and continuity of study, rendering it equal in this regard to any and superior to most other subjects of the high-school curriculum.

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